

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 5, 2011

The Honorable Herb Kohl  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, FDA, and Related  
Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture,  
Rural Development, FDA, and Related  
Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Blunt:

As you consider Fiscal Year 2012 funding levels for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's discretionary programs, we urge you to include the President's requested level of \$324.6 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) at the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Established in the 2008 farm bill, AFRI is a competitive grant program that supports research to address some of the largest challenges facing the world in the coming decades, such as: (1) how to feed over 9 billion people in the world by 2050; (2) how to enhance the nutrition in our food supply; and (3) how to ensure that America has the safest food supply in the world. There has been a high demand nationwide for AFRI research funds at our land grant universities and research institutions, which use the funds to support critical agriculture research to address some of these national and global challenges. In fiscal year 2009, AFRI made 470 awards out of over 2,300 submissions; 800 other projects were also judged as worthy of receiving funding.

We are especially encouraged that AFRI has made biomass feedstock development a high priority for its upcoming grant awards. Meeting our national Renewable Fuels Standard goal of producing 36 billion gallons of renewable fuels by 2022 will require a substantial investment in the production of high-quality, cost-effective feedstocks for advanced biofuel production. Developing these feedstocks, and the most sustainable methods of growing them, presents exciting economic development opportunities in America's rural communities, but only if we act today to make the necessary research investments.

We appreciate the constraints you face in allocating scarce dollars for discretionary programs at USDA. However, investing in research is investing in America's future. If America is going to be competitive in the global economy in the coming decades, we have to address long-term challenges by making strong investments in agricultural research today. We urge you to make AFRI a priority as you make your Fiscal Year 2012 appropriations decisions. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



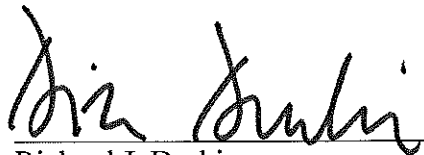
Al Franken  
United States Senator



Jeff Bingaman  
United States Senator



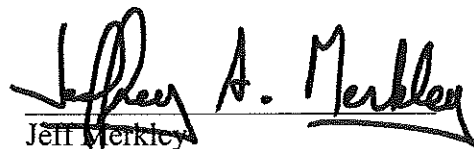
Carl Levin  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator